

Imam al-aazam

Abu Hanifah

and his

Expertise in

Hadith

By

Engr. Mohammad Fazlullah Sabri Chishti

FALAH RESEARCH FOUNDATION

Jamaat
Hajrat
Khalid Raza
Chishti Sabri

Imām al-Azam Abū Ḥanīfah and his Expertise in Ḥadīth

(Born 80 A.H/689 C.E-Died 150 A.H/767 C.E)

By:

Muhammed Fazlullāh Sābri Chishti

FALAAH RESEARCH FOUNDATION

523/7, Waheed Market, Matia Mahal, Jama Masjid, Delhi-110006

Mobile: 09867934085

E-mail: zubairqadri@in.com

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بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

الحمد لله رب العالمين - الصلوة والسلام علي سيد المرسلين -

Nu'mān ibn Thābit was born in the city of Kufa (modern day Iraq) in the year 80 A.H /689 C.E.¹ He is better known as al-imām al-A'ōžom² (The Greatest Imām), or by his kunyah 'Abū Ḥanīfah. Born into a family of tradesmen, the Imām's family was of Persian origin.³ Imām Abū Ḥanīfah's father, Thābit, hād met in the city of Kufa the companion Sayyedinā 'Alī Ibn Abī Talīb (radiyAllāhu ānhu) who made *duā* for him and his progeny, and some say that Abū Ḥanīfah was a result of this *duā*.⁴

He is the first of the four *mujtahid* Imām and the only Successor (*tābi'i*) among them, having seen the Companions Anas ibn Mālik,⁵ Abdullāh ibn al-Hārith ibn Juz' al-Zabidī, Jābir ibn Abdullāh, Ma'qal ibn Yasar, Wa'sila ibn al-Asqa', 'A'isha bint Hajrad and 'Abdullāh ibn Anis.⁶ A person becomes a *tābi'i*

¹ Imām Dhahabi: Siyar a'lām al-nubalā', 6:391. Beirut: Mu'assasah al-Risālah, 1417/1996.

الإمام، فقيه الملة، عالم العراق أبو حنيفة النعمان بن ثابت بن زوطى التيمي، الكوفي، مولى بني تميم

الله بن ثعلبة يقال: إنه من أبناء الفرس. ولد سنة ثمانين في حياة صغار الصحابة.

² Imām Dhahabi: Tadhkirat al-huffāz, 1:168. Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-'ilmiyyah, 1374/1956

الإمام الأعظم فقيه العراق

³ Ibn Hajar: Tahdhib al-Tahdhib, 4:229. Beirut: Mu'assasah al-Risālah, 1416/1995

⁴ Imām Dhahabi: Siyar a'lām al-nubalā', 6:395. Beirut: Mu'assasah al-Risālah, 1417/1996.

⁵ Imām Dhahabi: Siyar a'lām al-nubalā', 6:391. Beirut: Mu'assasah al-Risālah, 1417/1996

⁶ This is the verdict of Ibn Hajar as recorded by Imām Suyūti: Tabayid al-sahifa, p.34. Beirut: Dar al-Kutub al-'ilmiyyah, 1410/1990

(successor) by meeting a *Sahābi* (a companion of the Prophet, ṣallAllāhu alayhi wa sallam) and seeing him. It is not a condition that he keeps his company and narrates from the *Sahābi*.⁷

Some said that Imām Abū Ḥanīfah narrated from seven companions⁸ while others said that he narrated from eighteen companions.⁹

He is one of the four Imāms whose school of jurisprudence is followed.¹⁰ Imām Abū Ḥanīfah was the first to start the systematic study of Jurisprudence¹¹, analyse Islamic Jurisprudence and divide it into subjects.

It has been authentically narrated that Sufyān al-Thawri (d. 161 A.H) praised Imām Abū Ḥanīfah. Sufyān al-Thawri said: "Imām Abū Ḥanīfah was the best Jurist (*faqih*) from the inhabitants of earth."¹² Sufyān al-Thawri stood up when Abū Ḥanīfah visited him after his brother's death, and he said: "This man holds a high rank in knowledge, and if I did not stand up for his knowledge, I would stand up for his age, and if not for his age then for his piety and if not for his piety then for his

⁷ Imām Ibn Hajar: *Nuzhat al-nazar*, p.143. Riyadh: Al Maktaba Al Wataniya, 1422/2001

⁸ Ibn Kathir: *Al-Bidaya wa'l-Nihaya*, 13:416. Riyadh: Dār Alam al Kutub, 1424/2003

⁹ al-Haytami: *al-Khayrāt al-hisān fī manāqib Abi Hanīfah al-Nu'mān*, p.25, Egypt, 1324/1906

¹⁰ Ibn Kathir: *Al-Bidaya wa'l-Nihaya*, 13:416. Riyadh: Dār Alam al Kutub, 1424/2003

¹¹ al-Haytami: *al-Khayrāt al-hisān fī manāqib Abi Hanīfah al-Nu'mān*, p.32, Egypt, 1324/1906

¹² al-Khatib al-Baghdadi: *Tarikh Baghdad*, 15:471. Beirut: Dār al-Gharb al-Islami, 1422/2001

من عند أبي حنيفة فيقول لقد جئت من عند أفقه أهل الأرض

Jurisprudence.¹³

'Abd Allāh ibn al-Mubārak (d.181 A.H/797 C.E) said "Abū Ḥanīfah is the best in Jurisprudence among the people. I have not seen the like of him in Jurisprudence."¹⁴

His authority in the field of Jurisprudence can be realised by reading the statement of Imām Shāfi'i, who said: "People are dependent on Abū Ḥanīfah in the field of Jurisprudence. I have not seen anyone better in Jurisprudence than Abū Ḥanīfah."¹⁵ In another statement he said: "People are children to Abū Ḥanīfah in Jurisprudence." Imām Dhahabi added: "Leadership in the matters of Jurisprudence and its detail belongs to him and there is no doubt on this issue".¹⁶

al-'A'mash [d.148 A.H/765 C.E] who was an authority in the field of ḥadīth (*muhaddith*) said to Abū Ḥanīfah: "O Nu'mān! What is your opinion regarding such-and-such matter?" He replied: "Such-and-such." He said: "From where do you say this?" He said: "You narrated to us ḥadīth from so-and-so such-and-such." Al-'A'mash said: "O group of Jurists, you are the

¹³ *ibid*, 15:467-8

أوما أنكرت من ذلك هذا رجل من العلم عكان فان لم أقم لعلمه قمت لسنه وإن لم أقم لسنه قمت لفقته وإن لم أقم لفقته قمت لورعه فاجمعي فلم يكن عندي جواب

¹⁴ *ibid*, 15:469

وأما أفقه الناس فأبو حنيفة ثم قال ما رأيت في الفقه مثله

¹⁵ *ibid*, 15:474

الشافعي يقول الناس عيال على أبي حنيفة في الفقه الشافعي يقول ما رأيت أحدا أفقه من أبي حنيفة

¹⁶ Imām Dhahabi: *Siyar a'lām al-nubalā'*, 6:403. Beirut: Mu'assasah al-Risālāh, 1417/1996

وقال الشافعي: الناس في الفقه عيال على أبي حنيفة. قلت: الإمامة في الفقه ودقائقه مسلمة إلى هذا

الإمام. وهذا أمر لا شك فيه

doctors, and we are the pharmacists."¹⁷ In another narration al-'A'mash has been recorded to have said: "You have achieved both the stations [of a *muhaddith* as well as a Jurist]."¹⁸ He meant that the narrators of *aḥādīth* merely narrate the *aḥādīth* just as a pharmacist distributes medicine, but the Jurist show the application of these *aḥādīth* just as a doctor prescribes the appropriate medicine for the appropriate illness.

To become a Jurist of the highest rank [*mujtahid mutlaq*], one of the necessary requirement is to be an expert in the science of *ḥadīth*. As for the breadth of a Jurist's knowledge, it is recorded that Imām Ahmad ibn Hanbal's student Muhammad ibn 'Ubaydullah ibn al-Munadi heard a man ask him (Imām Ahmad): "When a man has memorised 100,000 *aḥādīth*, is he a scholar of Jurisprudence?" And he said, "No." The man asked, "200,000 then?" And he said, "No." The man asked, "Then 300,000?" And he said, "No." The man asked, "400,000?" And Ahmad gestured with his hand to signify "about that many"¹⁹.

The superiority of a Jurist over a scholar of *ḥadīth* (*muhaddith*) has been conveyed by the Prophet ṣallāllāhu ālayhi wa sallam in a narration recorded by Abū Dawūd. Narrated Zayd ibn Thābit: I heard the Apostle of Allāh (peace be upon him) say: May Allāh

¹⁷ Ibn Hibbān: Kitāb al-Thiqāt, 8:467. India: Dairatul Ma'arif, 1393/1973

قال: الأعمش أنتم يا معشر الفقهاء الأطباء ولعن الصيادلة

¹⁸ al-Haytami: al-Khayrāt al-hisān fi manaqib Abi Hanīfah al-Nu'mān, p.69, Egypt, 1324/1906

وأنت أيها الرجل أخذت بكل الطرفين

¹⁹ Ibn al-Qayyim: I'lam al-muwaqqi'in, 6:115. Saudi Arabia: Dār ibn al-Jawziyyah, 1423/2002

أرواية محمد بن عبيد الله بن المنادي وقد سمع رجلا يسأله إذا حفظ الرجل مائة ألف حديث يكون فقهيا قال لا قال فمائة ألف قال لا قال فعلا مائة ألف قال لا قال فأربع مائة ألف قال بيده هكذا وحركها.

brighten a man who hears a tradition (*ḥadīth*) from us; gets it by heart and passes it on to others. Many a bearer of knowledge conveys it to one who is more versed than he is; and many a bearer of knowledge is not versed in it²⁰.

The meaning of the narration is that many *muhaddith* (those who transmit the *ḥadīth*) merely transmit the *ḥadīth* and convey it to the Jurists who deduce ruling from these *aḥādīth*.

Imām Abū Ḥanīfah was a Jurist of the highest order. He was an absolute *mujtahid* (*mujtahid mutlaq*). He was able to derive rulings from the texts through his own linguistic and juridical perspicuity. He not only memorised thousands of *aḥādīth* but was also able to use those *aḥādīth* for deriving the laws of Jurisprudence. Reiterating the view of Imām al-'A'mash, another scholar of *ḥadīth*, Imām Abu 'Isa al-Tirmidhi (d. 279 A.H/892 C.E) said: "The Jurists are more knowledgeable of the meaning of *aḥādīth*"²¹.

Once it is established that Imām Abū Ḥanīfah was a Jurist of the highest order, it is understood that he was a master in the science of *ḥadīth*, which is one of the pre requisites to be a *mujtahid mutlaq*.

²⁰ Abū Dawūd: Sunan, 4:46, Chapter: Kitāb al-ilm, no.3660. Beirut: Dār Ibn Hazm, 1418/1997

نظر الله امرأ سمع منا حديثاً فحفظه حتى يبلغه فرب حامل فقه إلى من هو أفقه منه ورب حامل فقه

ليس بفقيه

²¹ Tirmidhi: Jami' at-Tirmidhi, 3:307, Chapter: Kitāb al-Janā'iz, no.990. Egypt: Mustafā Al-Babī Al-Halabi, 1398/1978.

قال الفقهاء وهم أعلم بمعاني الحديث

Kufa at the time of the Imām's birth [in 80 A.H] was a great center of knowledge and learning, with many of the noble Prophet's (ṣallāllāhu ālayhi wa sallam) companions having taken residence there. The successor (*tāb'i*) Qatāda bin Diama (d.117A.H/735 C.E) said that one thousand and fifty companions of the Prophet (ṣallāllāhu ālayhi wa sallam) settled in the city of Kufa among which twenty four were those who participated in the battle of Badr²².

The vast amount of *aḥadīth* narrated by these companions were memorised by Imām Abū Ḥanīfah. It would not be wise to say that having been born at the center of ḥadīth transmission, the Imām did not learn the science of ḥadīth!

It has been recorded that Imām Abū Ḥanīfah travelled extensively to increase his knowledge of ḥadīth. Imām Dhahabi writes: "Imām Abū Ḥanīfah travelled extensively in search of ḥadīth especially after 100 A.H".²³

Imām al-Sam'ānī [d.562A.H/1166C.E] an authority in the field of ḥadīth and history, writes: "When he [Imām Abū Ḥanīfah] engaged himself in the pursuit of knowledge, he went into the

²² Imām Sakhāwī: *Fath al-mughīth bi-sharḥ Alfīyat al-ḥadīth lil-Irāqī*, 4:111. Egypt: Maktabah As sunnah, 1424/2003

وقال قتادة: "للكوفة من الصحابة ألف وخمسون؛ منهم أربعة وعشرون بدرية"

²³ Imām Dhahabi: *Siyar a'lām al-nubalā'*, 6:396. Beirut: Mu'assasah al-Risālah, 1417/1996.

الإمام أبان حنيفة طلب الحديث وأكثر منه في سنة مائة وبعدها

depth of knowledge and attained such a rank which others could not."²⁴

Imām Abū al-Mu'ayyid Al-Muwaffaq ibn Ahmad ibn Muhammad al-Makki al-Khawārizmi (d.568 A.H/1172 C.E) has recorded that Imām Abū Ḥanīfah learnt religious sciences from around four thousand teachers. He has mentioned the names of two hundred and forty six teachers.²⁵

One of the teachers in this list is Imām Sha'bi (d.104 A.H/722 C.E), who has been reported to have met five hundred companions of the Prophet (ṣallāllāhu ālayhi wa sallam)²⁶ and narrated ḥadīth from one hundred and fifty companions of the Prophet (ṣallāllāhu ālayhi wa sallam)²⁷. He was one of the chief teachers of Imām Abū Ḥanīfah²⁸. When such is the status of one of the teachers of Imām Abū Ḥanīfah, then imagine the amount of knowledge which Imām Abū Ḥanīfah would have received from all of his teachers!

²⁴ 'Abd al-Karīm ibn Muḥammed al-Sam'ānī: *Kitāb al-Ansāb*, 6:67. Cairo: Maktaba Ibn Taymiyyah, 1400/1980

واشتغل بطلب العلم وبأبلغ فيه حتى حصل له ما لم يحصل لغيره

²⁵ al-Khawārizmi: *Manāqib al-Imām al-A'ẓam*, 1:67-88. India: Da'irat al-Ma'arif, 1321/1894

²⁶ Imām Dhahabi: *Tadhkirat al-huffāz*, 1:81. Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-'ilmiyyah, 1374/1956

اشعبة عن منصور بن عبد الرحمن عن الشعبي قال: أدركت خمسمائة من أصحاب النبي صلى الله عليه وآله وسلم

²⁷ Ibn Hibbān: *Kitāb al-Thiqāt*, 5:186. India: Da'irat al-Ma'arif, 1398/1978

رَوَى عن: خمسين ومائة من أصحاب رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم

²⁸ Imām Dhahabi: *Tadhkirat al-huffāz*, 1:79. Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-'ilmiyyah, 1374/1956

وهو أكبر شيخ (أبي حنيفة)

Abu Muhammad 'Abdullāh bin Muhammad bin Yāqūb bin al Hārith al Hārithi [d. 340 A.H/ 952 C.E] has recorded on the authority of Yahyā bin Nasr that he said, "I entered upon Imām Abū Ḥanīfah's place which was filled with books, so I said, "what is this"? He (Imām Abū Ḥanīfah) said, "These are all *ahādīth*. I have narrated only a few of them from which people can derive benefit."²⁹

'Abd Allāh ibn al-Mubārak, who is an authority in the field of ḥadīth, narrated ḥadīth from Imām Abū Ḥanīfah³⁰. He has been authentically reported to have said: "If anyone has the right to issue [a legal verdict] using his opinion, Abū Ḥanīfah has the right to issue using his opinion."³¹

Abu Muhammad Al-Hasan ibn Abd ar-Rahmān Khallad Al-Rāmahurmuzi (d. 360 A.H/970 C.E) wrote al-Muhaddith al-Fāsīl Bayn al-Rawī wa al-Wa'i ("The Ḥadīth Scholar That Differentiates Between Narrators and Containers"). It was the first comprehensive book on ḥadīth science ever written. In this book he writes: "Whenever Imām Sh'uba and Imām Sufyān al

²⁹ Yāqūb al Hārithi: Musnad Abū Ḥanīfah, p.276, no.805. Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-'ilmiyyah, 1429/2008

أحد من مرفوع: كَتَبَ إِلَيَّ صَاحِبُ بَيْتِ أَبِي رَمِيحٍ، أَخْبَرَنَا مُحَمَّدُ بْنُ عَمْرِو بْنِ الْوَرَّاقِ، أَخْبَرَنَا خَالِدُ بْنُ رِزْوَانَ، أَخْبَرَنَا
يَحْيَى بْنُ نَعْرِ بْنِ حَاجِبٍ، قَالَ: دَخَلْتُ عَلَى أَبِي حَنِيفَةَ، فِي بَيْتِهِمْ، فَمَلَأُوا كُتُبًا فَقُلْتُ: مَا هَذَا، قَالَ: هَذِهِ
أَحَادِيثُ كُلِّهَا، وَمَا حَدَّثْتُ بِهِ إِلَّا الْيَسِيرَ الَّذِي يُنْتَفَعُ بِهِ.

³⁰ Ibn Abi Shaybah: Musannaf, 7:574 (no.12532) and 14:342 (no.28611) Beirut: Dar Qurtuba, 1427/2007

³¹ al-Khatib al-Baghdadi: Tarikh Baghdad, 15:471. Beirut: Dar al-Gharb al-Islami, 1422/2001

عبد الرزاق يقول سمعت بن المبارك يقول إن كان أحد ينبغي له أن يقول برأيه فأبو حنيفة ينبغي له أن
يقول برأيه أخبرني

Thawri had a difference of opinion regarding a ḥadīth, they would say "let us go to Mis'ar [ibn Kidam] as he is the scale of authority in this field".³²

Both, Imām Sh'uba (d. 160 A.H/777 C.E) and Imām Sufyān al-Thawri (d.161A.H/778C.E) were authorities in the field of ḥadīth. When they had a disagreement they used to visit Imām Mis'ar ibn Kidam, whose narrations are found in the six major collections of ḥadīth. This is enough to show the high status of Imām Mis'ar ibn Kidam [d.155 A.H/772 C.E] in the science of ḥadīth.

Imām Mis'ar ibn Kidam who is an authority in the field of ḥadīth, said: "We attained the science of ḥadīth with Abū Ḥanīfah but he surpassed us. Then we opted for asceticism (abandoning the desire of the world) and he outstripped us in this as well. Thereafter, we started competing with him in Jurisprudence and his Juristic excellence is before you!"³³

Imām Shu'ba bin al-Hajjāj was an expert in the science of criticism and praise of ḥadīth narrator (*Jorh wo To'dil*). Ibn 'Abd

³² al-Rāmahurmuzi: Muhaddith al-Fāsīl Bayn; P 395, no.402. Beirut: Dar al-Fikr, 1391/ 1971

أحدنا عبد الله بن أحمد الغزالي قال: سمعت إبراهيم بن سعيد الجوهري يقول: كان شعبة وسفيان إذا
اختلفا قالوا: اذهبنا إلى الميزان مسعر.

³³ Imām Dhahabi: Manāqib al- Imām Abi Hanīfah wa Sahibayh, p.43. Indla: Jannat Ihyā al-Ma'arif al-Nu'maniyyah, 1366/1947

أبو يحيى بن أبي ميسرة: ثنا خلاد بن يحيى قال: قال مسعر بن كدام: طلبت مع أبي حنيفة الحديث
فقلبنا، وأخذنا في الزهد فبرع علينا، وطلبنا معه الفقه فجاء منه ما ترون.

al-Barr narrates through his chain of narration that Shu'bah bin al-Hajjāj had good opinion about Imām Abū Ḥanīfah.³⁴

Makki ibn Ibrāhīm (126 A.H/744C.E– 214 A.H/829C.E) is an authority in the field of ḥadīth sciences and one of the senior most teachers of Imām Bukhārī. He has narrated ḥadīth from Imām Abū Ḥanīfah. He praised Imām Abū Ḥanīfah by saying: "He was the most knowledgeable of the people in his time."³⁵

Imām al-Mizzi writes: Sālih ibn Muhammad al-Asadi al-Hāfiz said: I heard Yahyā ibn Ma'in [d.233 A.H/847 C.E] say: "Abū Ḥanīfah was trustworthy in ḥadīth. He did not narrate a ḥadīth except that which he remembered."³⁶

Imām al-Dhahabi wrote: "Logic, dialectics and the philosophy of the ancients were not, by Allāh, from the sciences of the *Sahābah*, nor the *Tabi'in*, nor al-Awza'i, al-Thawri, Mālik and Abū Ḥanīfah. Rather, their sciences were the Qur'ān and

³⁴ Ibn 'Abd al-Barr: Al-Intiqa fi Fadā'il al-A'immati l-Thalāthāt al-Fuqahā, p.196, Beirut: Dār al-Bashāir al-Islamiyyah, 1417/1997.

شبابه بن سوار يقول كان شعبة حسن الرأي في أبي حنيفة

³⁵ al-Khatib al-Baghdadi :Tarikh Baghdad, 15:473. Beirut: Dar al-Gharb al-Islami , 1422/2001

وقال النخعي حدثنا إسماعيل بن محمد الفارسي قال سمعت مكي بن إبراهيم ذكر أبا حنيفة فقال كان أعلم أهل زمانه

³⁶ al-Mizzi:Tahdhib al-Kamāl 29:424.Beirut: Mu'assasah al-Risālah, 1408/1987, Imām al-Dhahabi: Siyar a'lām al-nubalā', 6:395. Beirut: Mu'assasah al-Risālah, 1417/1996, al-Khatib al-Baghdadi :Tarikh Baghdad, 13:419. Beirut: Dar al-Gharb al-Islami , 1422/2001

وقال صالح بن محمد الاسدي الحافظ: سمعت يحيى بن معين يقول: كان أبو حنيفة ثقة في الحديث.

ḥadīth.³⁷" This is sufficient evidence to indicate the expertise of Imām Abū Ḥanīfah in the field of Qur'ān and ḥadīth.

Ali ibn al-Madini (d. 235 A.H/850 C.E) said: "Al-Thawri, Ibn al-Mubārak, Hammād ibn Zayd, Hushaym, Waki' ibn al-Jarrāh, 'Abbād ibn al-'Awām and Ja'far ibn 'Awn narrated from Abū Ḥanīfah. He is trustworthy there is no harm in him."³⁸

Abu 'Umar ibn 'Abd al-Barr (d. 463 A. H/1071CE) has mentioned names of sixty seven scholars in the field of ḥadīth and Jurisprudence. After mentioning these names he writes: "All of them have praised Imām Abū Ḥanīfah with lofty words."³⁹

Imām Abū Dawūd [d.275 A.H/897C.E], the compiler of Sunan, an undisputed authority in the field of ḥadīth, said: "Allāh have mercy on Mālik, he was an Imām, Allāh have mercy on al-Shāfi'i,

³⁷ Imām Dhahabi: Tadhkirat al-huffāz, 1:205. Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-'ilmiyyah, 1374/1956

يعلم المنطق والجدل وحكمة الأوائل التي تسلب الإيمان وتورث الشكوك والحيرة التي لم تكن والله من علم الصحابة ولا التابعين ولا من علم الأوزاعي والثوري ومالك وأبي حنيفة وابن أبي ذئب وشعبة ولا والله عرفها ابن المبارك. ولا أبو يوسف القائل من طلب الدين بالكلام تزندق ولا وكيع ولا ابن مهدي ولا ابن وهب ولا الشافعي ولا عفان ولا أبو عبيد ولا ابن المديني واحمد وأبو ثور والمزني والبخاري والأثرم ومسلم والنسائي وابن خزيمة وابن سريج وابن المنذر وأمثالهم بل كانت علومهم القرآن والحديث والفقه والنحو وشبه ذلك نعم

³⁸ Ibn 'Abd al-Barr: Jami' Bayān al-'Ilm wa Fadlihi, p. 1083, no.2112. Dammām: Dār Ibn al-Jawzi, 1414/1994

وقال علي بن المديني: أبو حنيفة روي عنه الثوري وابن المبارك وحماد بن زيد وهشيم وو كيع بن الجراح وعباد بن العوام وجعفر بن عون. وهو ثقة لا بأس به.

³⁹ Ibn 'Abd al-Barr: Al-Intiqa fi Fadā'il al-A'immati l-Thalāthāt al-Fuqahā, p.193-229. Beirut: Dār al-Bashāir al-Islamiyyah, 1417/1997

he was an Imām, Allāh have mercy on Abū Ḥanīfah; he was an Imām.⁴⁰

Imām Dhahabi [d.748 A.H/1347 C.E] is one of the most strict ḥodīth scholars to be born in the Islāmic history. He laid down very stringent conditions for accepting any narrator of the ḥodīth to be trustworthy. This Imām Dhahabi not only wrote a book in praise of Imām Abū Ḥanīfah but praised Imām Abū Ḥanīfah in his other works as well.

Dhahabi included Imām Abū Ḥanīfah in *Tadhkirot al-huffāz*, which he introduced with the words: "This is the memorial of the names of those who were declared the trustees among the carriers of the Science of the Prophet and to whose *ijtihād* one refers concerning matters of narrator-certification, authentication and falsification."⁴¹

Regarding Khārijah Ibn Zayd Ibn Thābit, Imām Dhahabi writes: "He was a major scholar of Jurisprudence, but narrated only a few ḥadīth. Hence I have not included him in the *huffāz* (memoriser) of ḥadīth."⁴² Similarly, Imām Dhahabi has not

⁴⁰ ibid, p.67

سمعت أبا داود سليمان بن الأشعث بن إسحاق السجستاني رحمه الله يقول: رَحِمَ اللهُ مالكا كان إماماً. رَحِمَ اللهُ الشافعي كان إماماً. رَحِمَ اللهُ أبا حنيفة كان إماماً.

⁴¹ Imām Dhahabi: *Tadhkirot al-huffāz*, 1:1. Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-'ilmiyyah, 1374/1956

هذه تذكرة بأسماء معدلي حملة العلم النبوي ومن يرجع إلى اجتهادهم في التوثيق والتضعيف والتصحيح والتزييف وبالله اعتمد وعليه اعتبدو إليه انيب

⁴² ibid; 1:91

خارجة بن زيد بن ثابت الأنصاري المدني أحد الفقهاء من كبار العلماء إلا أنه قليل الحديث فلذلك لم أذكره في الحفاظ رحمه الله تعالى

mentioned those people in his book who were although *huffāz* of the ḥadīth, but were not accepted as a trustworthy narrator. Imām Dhahabi writes: "Hishām bin Muhammed al-Kalbi, *hōfiz* [memoriser of ḥadīth], but is among the *matruk* (abandoned) narrators. He was not trustworthy. Hence I have not included him among the *huffōz* of the ḥadīth."⁴³

It is in this *Todhkirot ol-huffōz*, Imām Dhahabi describes Imām Abū Hanīfah as "al-Imām al- A'āzam" (The Greatest Imām)⁴⁴ and devotes many pages in praise of Imām Abū Hanīfah and his teachers. This leaves with no doubt that Imām Abū Hanīfah was not only a major ḥadīth narrator but was a trustworthy narrator also.

Imām Shāfi'i said: "Knowledge revolves around three men: Mālik [bn Anas,], Laith [ibn Sā'd] and [Sufyān] ibn 'Uyaynah.". After writing this statement of Imām Shāfi'i, Imām Dhahabi adds: "I say there are seven others around whom the knowledge revolves and they are: al Awzā'i, al Thawri, Muammar, Abū Ḥanīfah, Shu'ba, Hammād and Hammād bin Zayd."⁴⁵

⁴³ ibid; 1:343

هشام بن الكلبي الحافظ أحد البترو كن ليس بثقة فلذلك لم أدخله بين حفاظ الحديث

⁴⁴ ibid; 1:168

أبو حنيفة الإمام الأعظم فقيه العراق

⁴⁵ Imām Dhahabi: *Siyar a'lām al-nubalā*, 8:94. Beirut: Mu'assasah al-Risālah, 1417/1996.

قَالَ الشَّافِعِيُّ: الْعِلْمُ يَكُونُ عَلَى ثَلَاثَةِ مَالِكِيٍّ، وَالثَّوْرِيِّ، وَابْنِ عُيَيْنَةَ. قُلْتُ: بَلْ وَعَلَى سَبْعَةٍ مَعَهُمْ. وَهُمْ: الْأَوْزَاعِيُّ، وَالثَّوْرِيُّ، وَمُعَمَّرٌ، وَأَبُو حَنِيفَةَ، وَشُعْبَةُ، وَالْحَمَّادَانِ

Dhahabi relates that, Waki' bn al-Jarrāh gave religious verdict (*fatwā*) according to what Abū Ḥanīfah said and Yahyā al-Qattan also used to give *fatwā* according to what Abū Ḥanīfah said.⁴⁶

Imām Dhahabi includes Imām Abū Ḥanīfah along with Imām Saī'd ibn musayyab, Imām Sha'bi, Imām Nakhai, Imām Zuhri, Imām 'Awzai and Imām 'Amash in the list of some of the great scholars who were the leaders of *ummah* during their time. All these scholars were expert in *ḥadīth*. By mentioning Imām Abū Ḥanīfah along with these *ḥadīth* scholars, Imām Dhahabi has shown that Imām Abū Ḥanīfah was an authority in the field of *ḥadīth*.⁴⁷

Imām Dhahabi writes "Towards the end of 150 A.H when most of the *tabi'een* (successors) had passed away, then a group of people took up the task of narrator certification, authentication and falsification. Imām Abū Ḥanīfah criticised Jābir al-Ja'fi, by saying: "I never saw a greater liar than Jābir al-Ja'fi"⁴⁸

⁴⁶ Imām Dhahabi: Tadhkirat al-huffāz, 1:307. Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-'ilmiyyah, 1374/1956

قال يحيى: ما رأيت أفضل منه يقوم الليل ويسرد الصوم ويفتي بقول أبي حنيفة وكان يحيى القطان يفتي بقول أبي حنيفة أيضاً

⁴⁷ Imām Dhahabi: Siyar a'lām al-nubalā', 9:525. Beirut: Mu'assasah al-Risālah, 1417/1996.

⁴⁸ Dhahabi: Dhikr min Yu'tamad Qaulah fil Jarah wal Tā'deel, p.175. Beirut: Dār al-Bashair al-Islamiyyah, 1410/1990

فلما كان عند انقراض عامة التابعين في حدود الخمسين ومئة. تكلم طائفة من الجهابذة في التوثيق والتضعيف. فقال أبو حنيفة: ما رأيت أكذب من جابر الجعفي

This criticism of Jābir al-Ja'fi was retained by Imām Ibn 'Adi⁴⁹ and Imām at-Tirmidhi, who relates through his chain of narration in which Imām Abū Ḥanīfah said: "I never saw a greater liar than Jābir al-Ja'fi and nor anyone more superior than 'Atā ibn Abū Rabah."⁵⁰ Imām Dhahabi writes: Abū Ḥanīfah said "I have seen both, Rabi'a and Abū Zanād but Abū Zanād is a better jurist".⁵¹ Imām Dhahabi uses this approval by Imām Abū Ḥanīfah for narrator certification. This is clear evidence that Imām Abū Ḥanīfah was cautious in narrating *ḥadīth* and was an authority in the science of criticism and praise of *ḥadīth* narrator.

It should be noted that if a scholar of *ḥadīth* does not narrate from a particular narrator, then that does not amount to that narrator being weak (*do'if*) or untrustworthy. For instance, Imām Bukhārī in his *Sohih al-Bukhārī* has narrated only two *oḥadīth* from Imām Ahmad bin Hanbal, out of which only one is narrated directly from Imām Hanbal. This does not imply that Imām Ahmad bin Hanbal was a weak narrator. Similarly Imām Bukhārī has not narrated even one *ḥadīth* through Imām Shafi'i, which does not mean Imām Shafi'i was a weak narrator. There are many reasons why some times trustworthy narrators are

⁴⁹ Ibn 'Adi: al-Kāmil fi al-du'afa', 2:113. Beirut: Dār al Fikr, 1409/1988

⁵⁰ Abū 'Isa Muhammad at-Tirmidhi: Jami' at-Tirmidhi, 5:741, *Kitāb al-'ilal*. Cairo: Mustafā al-Babi al-Halabi, 1398/1978

حدثنا محمود بن غيلان حدثنا أبو يحيى الحماني قال سمعت أبا حنيفة يقول ما رأيت أحدا أكذب من جابر الجعفي ولا أفضل من عطاء بن أبي رباح

⁵¹ Imām Dhahabi: Tadhkirat al-huffāz, 1:135. Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-'ilmiyyah, 1374/1956

وقال أبو حنيفة رأيت ربيعة وأبا الزناد وأبو الزناد أفقه الرجلين

not included in the chain of narration. For example, during the time of Imām Bukhārī, there was an issue of the creation of the Qur'ān. Imām Muhammed ibn Yahyā adh-Dhuhlī was one of the teachers of Imām Bukhārī. He considered the pronunciation of the Qur'ān as eternal and Imām Bukhārī said, 'Our actions are created and the pronunciation is one our actions.' The disagreement was only over the pronunciation (*lofz*) of the Qur'ān, not the words of the Qur'ān. This difference of view led to the disagreement between Imām Dhuhlī and his student, Imām Bukhārī. After this, mass propaganda started against Imām Bukhārī, which led to accusations that he believed the words of the Qur'ān to be created. When Imām Dhuhlī heard these rumors, he disconnected his ties with Imām Bukhārī and became his foe. He started warning people by announcing that they should not attend the lectures of Imām Bukhārī. As a result, people refrained from sitting in his lectures, except Imām Muslim Ibn Hajjāj. At last, due to his disappointment, Imām Bukhārī left the city of Nīshāpūr and returned to Bukhārā.⁵²

What has to be observed is that when everybody stopped sitting in the lectures of Imām Bukhārī, his student Imām Muslim ibn Hajjāj, did not leave his teacher. In spite of this closeness, Imām Muslim ibn Hajjāj has not narrated a single *ḥodīth* in his book *Sahih Muslim* from his teacher, Imām Bukhārī. Similarly Imām Muslim has not narrated any *ḥodīth* from Imām Dhuhuli, who happened to be his teacher as well. Here, we see Imām Muslim ibn Hallaj, taking precaution at the time of rumour. His not

narrating *oḥodīth* from Imām Bukhārī or Imām Dhuhuli does not make Imām Bukhārī and Dhuhuli as weak (*do'if*) narrators.

Imām Abū Ḥanīfah defined *Imōn* (faith) as declaration of the tongue and acceptance by the heart whereas some other scholars defined *Imōn* as declaration of the tongue and action of the limbs. Imām Abū Ḥanīfah considered actions to be the light of *Imōn*, where as others considered actions to be the integral part of *Imōn*. This disagreement of expressing the same thing but in different ways of polemics (*kolōm*) led to the confusion among many people. A few enemies of Imām Abū Ḥanīfah who were jealous with his popularity spread rumors that Imām Abū Ḥanīfah does not consider good actions to be a part of Islam itself! It was because of this rumour that many scholars of *ḥodīth* took precaution in not narrating *oḥodīth* from Imām Abū Ḥanīfah. However, this does not make him a weak (*do'if*) narrator.

Highlighting this fact, Shaykh Ibn Taymiyyah wrote: "There is no doubt regarding Imām Abū Ḥanīfah's knowledge. People later attributed many lies to Imām Abū Ḥanīfah, which were all untrue. The aim of such writings was to taint Imām Abū Ḥanīfah."⁵³

Imām Muhammed Ibn al-Hasan ash-Shaybānī [d.189A.H/805C.E] the foremost student of Imām Abū Ḥanīfah, compiled the narrations from his teacher which he called *Kitōb al-Athōr*. It

⁵³ Ibn Taymiyyah: *Minhāj al-Sunnah al-Nabawiyyah*, 2:619. Cairo: Muassasat Qurtuba, 1406/1986

⁵² Imām Dhahabī: *Siyar a'lām al-nubalā'*, 12:458. Beirut: Mu'assasah al-Risālāh, 1417/1996.

كما أن أبا حنيفة وإن كان الناس خالفوه في أشياء وأنكروها عليه فلا يستريب أحد في فقهه وفهمه
وعليه. وقد نقلوا عنه أشياء يقصدون بها الشناعة عليه. وهي كذب عليه قطعاً

was the first book composed in Islam after the generation of the Companions. Imām Abū Hanīfah laid down very strict conditions for narrating a ḥadīth. Imām al-Tahāwī [d.321A.H/933C.E] narrates with his chain of narration that Imām Abū Hanīfah said: "No man should narrate a ḥadīth unless he remembers it since the [first] day of hearing to the day of narrating."⁵⁴ Imām Dhahabi writes: "Imām Abū Ḥanīfah did not narrate a ḥodīth except that which he remembered".⁵⁵

Imām al-Nawawī writes: The view of [Imām] Mālik and [Imām] Abū Ḥanīfah is that no ḥodīth can be used as an evidence unless the narrator narrates it from his memory. This is an extreme view." Commenting on the above Imām al-Suyūti writes: "This condition is very difficult and the scholars of ḥodīth have acted contrary to it because if we analyse *sohihoyn* [Sahih al-Bukhārī and Sahih al-Muslim] we will not get many narrators who fulfilled this condition of memory."⁵⁶ It was because of this strict

⁵⁴ Mullā 'Alī al-Qārī: Sharh Musnad Abū Ḥanīfah, p.7. Beirut: Dar al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyyah, 1405/1985

قال الطحاوي حدثنا سليمان بن شعيب حدثنا أبي قال أملأ علينا أبو يوسف قال قال أبو حنيفة لا

ينبغي للرجل أن يحدث من الحديث إلا بما حفظه من يوم سمعه إلى يوم يحدث به

⁵⁵ Imām Dhahabi: Siyar a'lām al-nubalā', 6:395. Beirut: Mu'assasah al-Risālah, 1417/1996. This was reported by Imām al-Mizzī and Imām Ibn Hajar al-asqālāni as well. [See fn.36]

قال محمد بن سعد العوفي: سمعت يحيى بن معين يقول كان أبو حنيفة ثقة. لا يحدث بالحديث إلا بما

يحفظه ولا يحدث بما لا يحف

⁵⁶ al-Suyūti: Tadrīb al-Rawī fi Sharh Taqrīb al-Nawawī, 2:55. Beirut: Dar al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyyah, 1417/1996

فمن المشددين من قال: لا حاجة إلا فيما رواه من حفظه وتذكره. روى عن مالك. وأبي حنيفة. وأبي بكر الصيدلاني.

condition that not many people could narrate ḥodīth from Imām Abū Ḥanīfah.

In the science of ḥodīth, the shorter the chain of narration, the higher is its value and strength. Imām Bukhārī [d.256A.H/ 870 C.E] compiled his famous *al-Jōmi' al-Musnod al-Sohīh*, popularly known as Sahih al-Bukhārī. Sahih al-Bukhārī contains twenty two narrations with only three narrators [*Thulōthiyōt*] between Imām Bukhārī and Prophet (ṣallAllāhu ālayhi wa sallam). These twenty two chains are considered to be the loftiest. Out of these twenty two narrations, twenty are related by the students of Imām Abū Ḥanīfah. Of these twenty narrations, eleven narrations are from Makki bin Ibrahim alone, a student of Imām Abū Ḥanīfah!

Makki bin Ibrāhim was one of the teachers of Imām Bukhārī. In fact, Imām Bukhārī is a grand student of Imām Abū Ḥanīfah through many other chains of narration. We will suffice with one such chain of narration.

Imām Bukhari narrates from his father, Ismāil; who narrates from Ibn Mubārak who narrates from Imām Abū Ḥanīfah.

Imām Ibn Hajar al-asqālāni writes: "Ismāil bin Ibrahim bin al-Mughira al-Ja'fai, the father of the compiler of *Al-sohih* [al-Bukhārī]. He narrated from Hammād Ibn Zaid and [Abdullāh] Ibn Mubārak"⁵⁷. Imām Bukhārī writes that Ibn Mubārak narrated

⁵⁷ Ibn Hajar: Tahdhib al-Tahdhib, 1:140. Beirut: Mu'assasah al-Risālah, 1416/ 1995

إسماعيل بن إبراهيم بن المغيرة الجعفي البخاري والد الإمام صاحب الصحيح روى عن حماد بن زيد وابن المبارك.

from Imām Abū Ḥanīfah⁵⁸.

Hence it is clear that Imām Bukhārī's father narrated from Ibn Mubārak, who in turn narrated from Imām Abū Ḥanīfah.

Imām Ibn Hajar al-asqalāni writes: "The highest category of teachers from whom Imām Bukhārī narrates includes successors (*tobi'un*) like Makki bin Ibrāhīm, Abu 'Asim al-Nabil, 'Ubaidullah bin Musā, Abu Nu'aim al-Fadal bin Dukain and Khallād bin Yahyā".⁵⁹ It is interesting to note that in this "highest category" of teachers except Khallād bin Yahyā all others are students of Imām Abū Ḥanīfah.⁶⁰

The high rank of Imām Abū Ḥanīfah in the field of *ḥodīth* can be understood by realising the fact that he narrated about fifteen *ḥodīth* with one *sohōbi* (companion) between him and the Prophet (ṣallAllāhu alayhi wa sallam). All the companions of the Prophet (ṣallAllāhu alayhi wa sallam) are upright and considered trustworthy in *ḥodīth* science. These narrations with one link between the narrator and the Prophet (ṣallAllāhu alayhi wa sallam) are called *wuḥdōn* or *uhōdiyōt*. Out of the four Imāms of Jurisprudence Imām Abū Ḥanīfah alone has this high status. If there are two people between the narrator of the *ḥodīth* and the Prophet (ṣallAllāhu alayhi wa sallam) then the chain is called

⁵⁸ Imām Bukhari: Tārikh al-Kabir, 4:81, no.2253. Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyyah, 1407/1986

انحنان بن ثابت أبو حنيفة الكوفي مول لبني تيم الله بن ثعلبة روى عنه عباد بن العوام وابن المبارك

وهشيم ووكيع ومسلم بن خالد وأبو معاوية والبقري

⁵⁹ Ibn Hajar al-asqalāni: Fath al-Bāri; 1:503. Riyadh: Sultān bin 'Abdul Aziz printing, 1421/2001

⁶⁰ Imām Dhahabi: Manāqib al-Imām Abi Ḥanīfah wa Sahibayh, p.20. India: Jannat Ihyā al-Ma'arif al-Nu'maniyyah, 1366/1947

thunōiyōt. Imām Abū Ḥanīfah has narrated about five hundred *thunōiyōt*. Out of the four Imāms of Jurisprudence only Imām Abū Ḥanīfah and Imām Mālik have achieved this status of narrating *thunōiyōt*. And if there are three narrators between the narrator of the *ḥodīth* and the Prophet (ṣallAllāhu alayhi wa sallam), it is called *thulōthiyōt*. We have already discussed that Imām Ḥukhārī has twenty two *thulōthiyōt* (three links) but he has not narrated any *wuḥdōn* (one link) or *thunōiyōt* (two links) narration. On the other hand Imām Abū Ḥanīfah has narrated more than one thousand *thulōthiyōt*.

These narrations with one link, two links and three links between the Prophet (ṣallAllāhu alayhi wa sallam) and Imām Abū Ḥanīfah can be seen in Kitāb al-Athār of Imām Abu Yūsūf (d.182 A.H/798 C.E), Kitāb al-Athār of Imām Muhammad bin al-Hassan al-Shaybāni (d.189 A.H/805 C.E), Manāqib al-Imām al-Aāzam, Jaami' al-Masānīd; both by al-Khawārizimi (d.568A.H/1172C.E) and Manāqib al-Imām al-Aāzam by al-Kurdari (d.827A.H/1424 C.E)

Imām Abū Ḥanīfah was a *wali* (friend) of Allah. He spent his entire life in learning, practicing and teaching Islam. Yahyā Ibn Ma'in said: I heard Yahyā al-Qattān say: "We have sat in the company of Abū Ḥanīfah, by Allāh, and we heard from him. By Allāh, when I would look at him, I recognised in his face that he feared Allāh!"⁶¹ 'Ali ibn al-Madini narrated: I heard Sufyān ibn

⁶¹ al-Khatib al-Baghdadi: Tarikh Baghdad 15:482. Beirut: Dar al-Gharb al-Islami, 1422/2001

اوورعه أخيراً محمد بن أحمد بن رزق حدثنا أحمد بن علي بن عمر بن حبيش الرازي قال سمعت محمد بن

أحمد بن عصام يقول سمعت محمد بن سعد العوفي يقول سمعت يحيى بن معين يقول (Contidnext page)

'Uyaynah say: "Abū Ḥanīfah was an honourable person, and he would perform much prayers (*Salāh*) from his early life."⁶²

May Allah elevate the status of Imām Abū Ḥanīfah in both the worlds and help us to follow his teachings. Ameen.

Muhammed Fazlullāh Sābri Chishti

India, 18th Dhu al-Hijjah 1433 AH

4 November 2012 CE

سمعت يحيى القطان يقول جالسنا والله أبا حنيفة وسمعنا منه وكنت والله إذا نظرت إليه عرفت في وجهه أنه يتق الله عز وجل

⁶² ibid, 1S:483

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FALAAH RESEARCH FOUNDATION

523/7, Waheed Market, Matia Mahal, Jama Masjid, Delhi-11006

Mobile: 09867934085 / Email: zubairqadri@in.com